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Executive Registry

77-769

18 March 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
VIA : Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence *RL*
FROM :
National Intelligence Officer for Western Europe
SUBJECT : Student Violence in Italy and Turkey

1. Action Requested: None; for information only.

2. Summary: Attached are two short papers that we asked ORPA to prepare in response to the interest you expressed at your meeting with the NIOs on Monday. The Italian situation is more serious than the Turkish.

-- Italy. The latest wave of student unrest in Italy is particularly worrisome; it is bigger and better organized than in the past, and it comes at a time of rising political violence in general. Student grievances will not be redressed any time soon. With the PCI cooperating with Andreotti, many students conclude they have no real spokesman in the political arena, and their grievances run structurally deep. Widespread violence poses more danger than advantage to all members of the classe politica. This is why the Communists are working as hard as anyone to calm the students and prevent other outbreaks of violence.

-- Turkey. Student disorder in Turkey also differs in key respects from past unrest of this kind; it is less worrisome than in prior years, fewer students are involved, and they seem more preoccupied with fighting each other than with larger political issues. There is currently no significant urban terrorism or labor unrest. The Turks have a relatively high tolerance for student violence, and the military would step in only in the unlikely event the disorder becomes markedly worse.

*no comments made
on either the Italy
or Turkey paper*

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18 March 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Student Violence in Italy

1. Student unrest and other forms of political violence are not new phenomena in Italy. Several features of the current upsurge, however, make it more worrisome than previous ones.

--The student violence this weekend was on a larger scale than in the past;

--It frequently seemed directed against prearranged targets in a coordinated fashion;

--In Rome, the scene of the largest demonstrations, tensions among the police were reportedly so high that officers had to quell mutinous behavior among the troops;

--The current wave of student unrest is taking place at a time when political violence, in general, is on the rise.

The seriousness of the situation was underlined by Interior Minister Cossiga's refusal to rule out a proclamation of a state of emergency and a resort to martial law in the event of a new outbreak.

2. With the exception of a few isolated incidents, Italy's universities have been calm since the violence last weekend. But the deeply rooted problems that provoked the violence are not likely to be resolved in the near future, and the situation thus holds the potential for further flare-ups. Italy's unions have scheduled a nationwide general strike for 18 March and despite certain precautions--such as excluding Rome--labor demonstrations could provide opportunities for provocateurs. In addition, one student group is reportedly planning a demonstration in Rome on Saturday, in defiance of a ban on such activity in the city.

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3. Italy's growing economic and social problems and the unsettled political atmosphere are fueling student unrest. Shrinking job opportunities for degree-holders, overcrowded and underfinanced universities, and student cynicism about government pledges to change things have all contributed to the climate of violence. The Communist Party's tacit support for the government, meanwhile, has reinforced the students' feeling that they have no forceful spokesman on the national scene.

4. All of the political parties condemn the violence but differ over who is responsible. The Communists generally blame the situation on 30 years of Christian Democratic misrule, while the Christian Democrats accuse the Communists and other leftist parties of being less-than-enthusiastic about tough law enforcement. Despite the differences among the parties, persistent violence leading to a sharp deterioration of public order could strengthen the rationale for a government of "national emergency" including all but the neo-fascist and left-wing splinter parties--an alternative the Communists and Socialists have been pushing for months. The Communists fear, however, that protracted violence could also provoke a right-wing reaction and they have been in the forefront of those seeking to calm the students.

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